

Mark Quesnel
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Appropriations - DDS

Thank you to the co-chairs, Senator Osten, Senator Formica, and Representative Walker, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Mark Quesnel and I'm a SDSW for the Department of Developmental Services and have worked for DDS for the past 27 years.

I am testifying today to urge the committee to reject the cuts that the Governor has proposed to DDS. The Governor's budget largely relies on privatizing group homes, and in so doing, saving money by laying off state workers and underpaying private sector workers. This balances the budget on the backs of middle class workers and people with disabilities.

I have seen a lot over the years, cottage closings at Southbury Training School, closings of group homes, closing of regional centers, and most recently the proposed closing of our whole department.

During these times we faced lots of adversity and our clients have faced life changing events that did not always turn out good. But we continue to work in a profession that we enjoy and have put our hearts into. I currently work in Newington CT at a group home at 521 Maple Hill Ave.

My group home was on the list for Conversion to a Private provider within the private sector of DDS. During this period some of my individuals who live at 521 experienced anxiety and fear about getting all new staff to care for them. One individual that lives here had some fears that she might be sexually abused by these new staff. Another told me that he didn't want us to leave him because so many have left him before. This happens normally because staff move on when employees retire, get other jobs, get promotions, etcetera. The individuals we serve don't care about the current state budget, they don't care about privatization, they only essentially care about their own life stability and to maintain living with the people who really care about them.

I remember an individual I am currently with. It was my birthday and the staff had gotten me a cake and we had a little celebration, This individual bellowed out happy birthday so loud that it touched me, I hugged her and thanked her, she said " I love you." This experience cannot be replaced with privatization.

During the conversion process all the state employees would be replaced by private sector employees. Some of the state employees have worked at 521 Maple Hill Ave for 20 years with these individuals. I have doubted that a new private company can ever replace this experience and training of the state employees who work at 521.

People with disabilities deserve the right to receive care in the setting of their choice. Caregivers in both sectors deserve living wages and quality training.

Stop cutting DDS! I urge you to disregard the cuts requested in the Governor's budget and work with us going forward to find a way to help us provide the best care to our families.